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Forbidden Realms

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# Tantric Sex

## Part 1: Unmasking the Cosmic Opposites

Special thanks to Phill R. for contributing much needed info and expertise.



Are you interested in sexual forms of Tantra? Are you sure? The true purpose of such a discipline might be a little unsettling if you were to find out what it actually does. Most people are not ready for the mystery that it explores. Let's unpack just a tiny piece of Tantric script...



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following incantation comes from a rite of sex magic, to be performed in the presence of dead bodies:

- O goddess Kali, I am he who utters your mantra at midnight and makes offerings to you on the cremation grounds. An offering of a single pubic hair from his partner, pulled out by the root, wet with semen poured from his penis into her menstruating vagina. In so doing, I am a great poet, a lord of the world who, like a raja, always travels by elephant-back.

Why would a practitioner of the mystical arts use such a horrific setting as the charnel grounds for lovemaking? Or utilize such crude substances in a sacrificial rite that's obviously religious? It would seem that Tantric mystics are the "shock jocks" of the spiritual world.

Sexual Tantra is one of the most criticized, misunderstood, and reviled forms of spirituality in the world — and yet, its adherents claim that it is among the most powerful and effective of all spiritual disciplines, making enlightenment achievable in a single lifetime. Tantra is supposedly a method for "getting it off with God."

If this is so, how does it work? How could having sex in a graveyard amount to the short path to enlightenment?

There are many forms of Tantra, and all of them involve techniques for achieving enlightenment as quickly as possible: breath work, ritual, chanting, and highly imaginative forms of meditation. And yes, some of these forms do include sex magic. But the reputation of Tantra as some kind of sex-obsessed fetish cult comes mainly from the public's fascination with rock stars, scandals, and explicit illustrations — like the pictures found in books that have nothing to do with Tantra. The Kama Sutra, for example.

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*According to the Tantras, what can lead to confusion and distress for the ill-prepared brings liberation for the Tantric initiate.*

— Ian A. Baker

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The key to Tantra lies in its deliberate combination of male and female, light and dark, life and death, etc. It deliberately combines "opposites," as though *yin* and *yang* are like two rods in a nuclear reactor that heat up and create energy when they get close to

each other. But the manner in which Tantra does this for us is all too often concealed behind its shocking outward appearances. To engage in Tantric sex, you must be able to work with opposites — and at the same time avoid getting tricked by them, triggered by them, and caught up in their outward appearances.

The subtle and dangerous art of combining opposites is not easy. The extremes of life — like the adrenaline high of a bungee jump and the serotonin low of a session in a sensory deprivation tank — will not automatically blend together for you into some kind of magical cocktail of oneness with all creation. A life of opposite extremes will more likely transform you into an adrenaline junkie than an enlightened being. Unless, of course, you know what you're doing. Not everyone is ready to use pleasure as a path to enlightenment. There's a trick to it.

How can you know whether you're ready to practice sexual Tantra? Simple. Do you understand this entire article? If yes, you are ready. If no, you are not.

Why might you not be ready? What excludes you from admission? The key to sexual Tantra involves identifying and working with the correct pair of opposites. You see, there are many pairs of opposites to work with, and if you can't identify the right pair, sexual Tantra will be of no use. It will remain little more than an eccentric hobby.

## **The Four Dimensions**

In Tantra, there are four *dimensions* to consider. That is, there are four pairs of apparent opposites that Tantric practitioners work with. *None* of them is correct, but exploring all four, and unmasking each as an illusion, will eventually help us zero in on the one true pair that actually holds the key to unending bliss.

To put it another way, the four dimensions of Tantra provide a means for exploring the illusion of duality. One by one, we reveal that each pair of opposites is not really the right one, until finally, the root nature of our duality becomes clear to us and we can begin our work. We can begin to harness the energy of sex to achieve enlightenment.

The four illusory pairs of opposites are as follows:

1. **The horizontal dimension:** male and female. Transcendence.
2. **The vertical dimension:** Heaven and Earth. Transfiguration.
3. **The time dimension:** beginning and end. Transformation.
4. **The moral dimension:** good and evil. Transgression.

Some might argue that Tantra is far too vast and complex a subject to cover in just a couple of *Forbidden Realms* articles. That may be true when we think like an uptight anthropologist — that is, when we think we must catalog and compartmentalize the entire ocean before it's okay to go swimming. However, if we simply examine the four dimensions listed above, we will gain the keys to understanding any system of Tantra that is placed before us.

Well, maybe. Some of us are not ready to let go of outer appearances and sink down into a deeper level of understanding. Are you? Let's find out.

### **1. The horizontal dimension: male and female**

Sex is the most obvious thing going on in the graveyard scene mentioned above. And yet, the two people engaged in their ritual of combining male and female aren't really doing what they appear to be doing. *Male* and *female* are not really what they are combining. That's an illusion of the most basic kind, and if we can't see past it, we are not yet ready to practice Tantric sex.

On the surface of our biology, it is clear that there are two sexes and that they both have obvious and distinct characteristics. But how does that make them “opposites”? Are *man* and *woman* really like the two poles of a car battery, one positive and the other negative? Just because there are two sexes, does that mean the two sexes are somehow “opposed” to one another? Tantra operates on a far more subtle level than mere match-making. Sorry, but it’s not that easy. *Male* and *female* are not the cosmic opposites we are looking for. Not quite.

So many pairs of opposites to choose from, all of them false

**The mating dance:** Men and women are obviously members of the same species, so how is it that we’ve fallen for this outward appearance of opposition? Sometimes it is even referred to as the “battle of the sexes.”

Many people require a sense of aggressive opposition between *male* and *female* in order to become sexually aroused. As a result, their courtship behavior develops into a game

of make-believe attack and surrender.

A girl pinches a boy and runs away laughing, pretending to be afraid. He chases after her, pretending to be her attacker. The two young lovers mock fight with each other — or even fight for real — in order to get aroused. They wrestle not so much with *each other*, but rather, each wrestles with his or her own dark side. There is more than one primitive scenario playing itself out in their mating dance. One of those scenarios can be deeply disturbing. It sometimes erupts into a behavioral subroutine involving violence. And it is from this dark, troubling scenario that we derive our illusion of the “opposite.”

If all goes well, the play fight between the boy and girl transforms into lovemaking. They give in, and the mock struggle dissolves into a flurry of passion as both try to fuse together in a frantic attempt of each to disappear into the other. They succumb to the fiery need of “You complete me!”

Fusing together into one being is, of course, literally impossible — and in the end, the state of wondrous completeness that their tryst seemed to promise remains, alas, out of reach. Instead of achieving boundless bliss, they have ended up pawns in the game of reproduction. Well, at least it was fun while it lasted.

Why does the ultimate unity elude them? Because both of them have been duped. They have allowed themselves to become distracted by a false dichotomy, and they have failed to identify the true opposites that need to be combined. They will make a splendid couple, no doubt, but the gates of Tantra have remained closed to them.

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*“I don’t think it was union. On the contrary, it seemed the most violent of separations: two contrary beings flung at each other in heat and clumsiness, in trust and menace, the feelings of each unknowable and unfathomable to the other — its sweetness terrible as its brevity, its loneliness hurtful as its undeniable fire.”*

— Anne Rice

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It doesn’t take much common sense to notice that men are not really made of fire and women are not really made of water. Our imaginary sense of sex as a clash of cosmic opposites arises from something else, something other than those cosmic forces. It arises from that dark, disturbing scenario in our evolutionary past.

The opposition arises from trauma. From a deeply embedded fantasy of an attacker and a victim. This is not necessarily a comfortable reality to contemplate, especially for women. But the reality of our deep evolutionary past is that men have often succeeded in reproducing because they were strong enough to force themselves upon their partners.

What? Am I saying that the sexual behavior of humans today is based on a rape fantasy? No, not entirely. There are other fantasies at work here too. Genetically speaking, we are each inheritors of many gentle and loving unions between *male* and *female*. Such tender couplings are built into our cell memory, and we often act them out in our lovemaking. But we are also inheritors of other evolutionary mechanisms.

Since rape was actually, sometimes, a successful strategy for procreation, it only follows that evolution would select for aggressive sexual behavior as an inheritable trait. Both fantasy scenarios — consensual sex and rape — have been successful at producing offspring, so both scenarios have become embedded in our cell memory. Both scenarios present themselves as a means of getting turned on.

But here's where the real problem comes in. Some people have inherited much more of one trait than the other. This might begin to explain the existence of sadism and masochism. Both sadism and masochism involve a need for some kind of aggression in lovemaking. And much more than just a little courtship ritual of "Tag, you're it." Most people have a significant amount of rape trauma embedded in their cell memory, and that trauma sometimes produces a need for more than just a little opposition in their sexual encounters.

**The game of dominants and submissives:** In addition to the attacker/victim scenario, there's another similar distraction to contend with: the dynamic of the boss and the subordinate. The "dominant" and the "submissive." The "master" and "slave." These make-believe power relationships, if we are not aware of how much they shape our perception, tend to distract us from the true inner dynamics of sexual Tantra.

Because of the way humans have evolved, sexual tension often rises between bosses and subordinates. And this tension need not occur just between male bosses and female subordinates. It can crop up between any kind of boss and subordinate, regardless of the gender of each. It even develops between two people who aren't

interested in having sex with each other. This is because of our evolutionary baggage, of course. For most people, sex and power have become tangled together in the same package. Power relationships can trigger sexual tension just as easily as sexual tension can trigger power relationships.

How do I know this? Years ago I found myself stumped by a quiz question in a sexual-harassment training course — one of those routine training sessions that human resources requires employees at a university to complete. The question went something like this: “True or false: Sexual harassment always involves an abuse of power or authority.” I answered “False” and was surprised to learn that the quiz’s correct answer was “True.”

This I found really odd since I could prove the statement false with one simple scenario. Suppose a woman asks a coworker to go on a date. This is not considered sexual harassment. However, if the coworker says no and the woman asks again and again — and the advances are unwelcome — the situation then becomes harassment. Clearly, pestering a coworker for a sexual relationship need not have anything to do with a power play, as in when a boss promotes a subordinate in exchange for sex.

I discussed this question with coworkers and was surprised when they simply blinked at me and ignored my logic. They steadfastly agreed with the quiz, believing that sexual harassment always involves a power dynamic. This puzzled me greatly until I began to realize that most people regard sex itself as a power game. Apparently, a majority of people view sex as a struggle in which one person dominates (usually the man) and the other submits. This had not occurred to me. The domination and submission roles in my own sexual encounters were never of any interest to me, but I had always puzzled over why the game of dominants and submissives was such a big deal to others. I’ve only met three or four people for whom the game of “tops” and “bottoms” was unimportant. And those have been some of the most erotic, creative, and sensual encounters in my life.

It shouldn’t come as any surprise that many Tantric adepts are celibate. Since sex, for most people, has power-struggle scenarios tangled up in its arousal mechanisms, and since these scenarios involve a painful sense of duality between a dominant and a submissive, some mystics simply avoid their sexual baggage altogether and attempt to become asexual.

This might work for some of them if their karma is fairly mild. It depends on the severity of their evolutionary baggage. If the violent scenarios embedded in cell memory are too strong, those scenarios will continue to surface, demanding to be processed and resolved. They will crop up again and again, and interfere with enlightenment practices, preventing final liberation. It's hard to realize oneness with the universe when you continue to harbor a hidden fantasy of a face-off with some kind of dark, shadowy "other" in your sex life.

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*In the Shaiva Tantra tradition of ancient India, our two ultimate opposites took on male and female forms in a story about the cosmic romance between Shiva and Shakti.*

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When a celibate adept fails to face a deeply embedded sexual demon, its violent scenario will continue to resurface not just in sexual situations but in spiritual ones. In temple rituals, for example. It might take the form of a humiliating initiation rite — perhaps resembling the kind of bizarre hazing rituals encountered in some college fraternities — in which new initiates are beaten, insulted, and forced to do excruciating tasks in a manner resembling a sadomasochistic role-play session.

I wish I could offer words of comfort to the many people who require power games or aggression in order to become aroused. Such embedded fantasies will always impede spiritual progress at some point — that is, until they are dealt with. And they will absolutely disqualify someone from the inner practice of sexual Tantra. The embedded fantasy of the villain and the victim, the very fetish that serves as their arousal mechanism, is the very thing that will keep them from uncovering the true pair of cosmic opposites that Tantric initiates work with. For as we will see, the guardians that keep us from entering the sanctuary of the mysteries are none other than our own personal, unresolved hangups.

The “*infamis digitus*.” The ancient Roman gesture for warding off unwanted attention.

**The *infamis digitus*:** Flipping someone “the bird” — or giving someone the middle finger — is another example of how sex has become entangled in our power relationships. Considered an obscene phallic gesture, the middle finger has been with us apparently since the dawn of Western civilization. It was already a common behavior in ancient Greece, and it was documented as a vulgar means of insulting someone in the days of the Roman empire, especially if they were challenging your authority by staring at you, also known as the “evil eye.”

Among primates, one of the most subtle ways of showing submission is to avert your gaze. If a male chimp fails to look down as the alpha male approaches, he risks being mounted by the alpha. The alpha shows dominance by treating his subordinate like a submissive female. Humans have apparently inherited this primate behavior.

Humans are primates, and as such, primate behavior is part of our makeup. You might think that a man who rapes another man is a homosexual, but think again. This is rarely the case. It’s hard for many of us to fathom, but the urge to express dominance still manifests itself through a rape fantasy whether one is attracted to one’s victim or not. The stories of straight men sodomizing other straight men in prison, in hazing rituals, and in street gangs bear this point out.

What happens when you pass your boss in the hallway at work? As he or she looks straight ahead with a confident alpha gaze, do you avert your eyes, looking downward? That’s usually the appropriate response. However, if you choose to hold your gaze level

and give a confident nod, your boss might start to respect you more. Either that or he or she may begin to feel subconsciously threatened by your authority and find a way to “cut you down to size” later.

If you level the alpha-male gaze at a man in public, you might get an aggressive response: “What’re *you* lookin’ at!” The appropriate response is to cast your eyes downward or risk a contest of wills. However, the man might just flip you the bird and walk away, a gesture that basically means “Up yours!” In other words, instead of mounting you to show dominance as an alpha-male chimp might do, he will resort to a ritualized gesture (the finger) to hint that he can dominate you in a rape fantasy. When we feel challenged, it may be tempting to demonstrate to others that we are alphas and find some way of saying, “You can’t fuck with me. It is *I* who will fuck *you* over if you don’t stop challenging me.” Or of course, we can just use simpler words, such as “Fuck you!” or “Fuck off!” to achieve the same essential effect.

These vulgar behaviors demonstrate the sexual trauma that we have embedded in cell memory and how this trauma comes from stages of evolution that are often millions of years old. Mindlessly acting out this trauma not only keeps us stuck in a reactionary world of fear and desire, but it also perpetuates mankind’s ongoing association of sex with violence. It’s a kind of living nightmare of power struggles in which a primordial fear of rape makes us defend ourselves against imaginary foes. Some of us clearly have this kind of embedded trauma to a greater degree than others.

These scenarios of attackers and victims, dominants and submissives, and phallic hand gestures should provide you enough evidence to show how the world of sex, for many human beings, has become contaminated by “impurities” from our evolutionary past. That is, the simple and innocent play of sex has become confused with traumatic scenarios that are, in some cases, millions of years old. If these scenarios are particularly strong within us, then sex becomes something truly twisted and vulgar. It is “twisted” because its behavioral subroutines have become entangled needlessly with subroutines of violence. It is “vulgar” because the imaginary opposites of *attacker* and *victim* distract us from what we are really looking for: the true cosmic opposites within — which we have yet to discover here...

**Is S&M a form of Tantra?** The rape fantasy that we inherit from our evolutionary past does not always appear in men and women in predictable ways. The dominant sexual

partner is not always male, and the submissive partner is not always female. Men and women are members of the same species, so men can sometimes inherit passive role-playing urges from their mothers, and women can inherit dominance urges from their fathers. There are plenty of women who derive satisfaction from tying up their male partners, whipping them, and penetrating them with a riding crop or a strap-on dildo. And these women are, of course, on the lookout for men who become aroused by partners who humiliate them with verbal insults and simulated rape.

Sorry, kinksters, but kinky sex is not the same thing as Tantra. Not exactly. The games of sadomasochism are actually a form of karma that needs to be worked through before the inner world of Tantra becomes accessible. They are rape fantasies that are attempting to play themselves out so that we can make sense of them and let them go. The word “kinky” is itself a metaphor for tender, loving sexual behavior that has become tangled up in, snagged by, and confused with violence. Indulging in these confusing fantasies in a consensual and respectful way, carefully separating the tenderness from the aggression, and incorporating “safe words” and other safety practices, may very well help us to “comb out” the different strands of fantasy. Or to “set them straight.” To purify ourselves of the false associations and inappropriate reactions that might otherwise end up landing us in jail.

In this way, kinky forms of sex may very well prove useful and provide a means of dissolving the fearsome guardians that keep us from entering the true, inner sanctuary of Tantra — a realm in which there are other more subtle dimensions of opposites that await our exploration...

## **2. The vertical dimension: Heaven and Earth**

Surely, the true cosmic opposites we are looking for must be Heaven and Earth. What could better represent enlightenment than calling down the powers of Heaven to manifest in the physical realm? That’s what our two sexual deviants seem to be doing in the graveyard. They are combining the sacred with the profane. Superimposing a sacred, heavenly ritual upon a gratuitous display of bodily fluids. So according to their method, the marriage of Heaven and Earth is the true goal of Tantra, right?

Sorry. Wrong again. All Tantric initiates know that Heaven and Earth are already combined. There is no need to bring them together. You can’t bring together what was never separated to begin with. It’s already all a seamless unity.

If you try to repair something that has never been broken, you're essentially insane. The essence of all psychological disorders is composed of this very problem: our blindness to the unity of *high* and *low* and our resulting compulsion to force the one to combine with the other. To perceive the physical world as flawed and then try to force perfection upon it.

When we study history, we begin to see this more clearly. Or at least some of us do. It shows us that civilization's attempt to jam Heaven and Earth together — to produce some kind of perfect human being or a utopia—ends up with quite the opposite. Eutopia becomes dystopia. Irony is the language of angels.

It's pretty clear that not enough people have learned this lesson yet. We continue to drain swamps and pave over them with parking lots — as though a “perfect” square of asphalt is an improvement on a living swamp. We airbrush and digitally enhance images of naked women into “perfect” — only to end up producing a new generation of porn-addicted men who find it hard to become aroused by the real thing. We try to “perfect” the Earth by purifying it of disease — and we end up killing the good bacteria in our intestines, not to mention inadvertently breeding a whole new generation of antibiotic-resistant flesh-eating bacteria. There are more terrible ironies in store for us if we don't learn how to remove the imaginary gap between perfection and imperfection.

There's a difference between *combining* and *affirming*. Our two sexual deviants in the graveyard know something we don't. They already know that *Heaven and Earth do not need to be combined* — so when they do a ritual that “combines” rarefied spiritual prayer and gross bodily fluids, they are not really combining anything at all. They are merely *affirming* what is already the case: the already-existent, seamless unity of higher and lower worlds. There is no need to bring together two things that are already one and the same. Therefore, Heaven and Earth are not the opposites we are looking for.

**The mystery of the ouroboros:** Consider it like this. Imagine the entire universe as a serpent. It has a head, and it has a tail. But this serpent has become partially blind and numb. It has lost sight of its oneness with itself. Its head has become estranged from its body. It has become divided against itself, so it tries desperately to grasp at itself in order to re-establish some semblance of the wholeness it believes it has lost. So, the snake seeks its own tail, finds it, and clamps down. A vicious circle is created.

Holding on for dear life like this is painful to the snake, but at least holding on feels better than coping with its imaginary lack of completeness. Anyone who looks at the snake can see that its frantic outward attempt at self-unity is futile and stupid. Its “perfect circle,” its make-believe symmetry, is just pretend. Its dignity is contrived.

Perhaps you know people like this? To become truly impressive as a sentient being, the serpent needs to let go of itself and simply *affirm* — or simply recognize — that its head and its tail are already unified in a single body. There is no need to join them together in a perfect circle. To do this, the snake must learn how to focus within, find that illusory dividing line between *higher* and *lower*, and blast through it.

*There is nothing missing, lacking, or wrong! There never was. Awakening leaves you as you are — before you began imagining lack in yourself and desiring objects to fill the imaginary void.”*

— Michael Rodriguez

The key to unlocking the paradox of higher and lower worlds, then, involves techniques that help us see that spirit and matter are made up of the *same* universal substance. Not only that, but we must also observe this inner universal substance as it displays itself in outward forms that appear to be opposites — not only as male and female but also as Heaven and Earth, mind and body, spirit and matter, etc.

These can be seen as different levels of vibration if you like, but they are not necessarily opposed to each other. The *prima materia* (the singular substance from which the universe is made) functions at different wavelengths, some of which we can see and some of which we cannot. A “higher” level we can refer to as spiritual, and a “lower” level we can refer to as material. An actual division between higher and lower

levels of activity does not occur anywhere in the world. It exists as a fabrication in imagination. *Such fabrications can be removed.*

But we cannot accomplish this by forcing the laws of a Heavenly Jerusalem upon an Earthly community. Or by calling upon the lightning of God above to reign down His judgment upon the wicked sinners of Earth below. Furthermore, we cannot restore our sense of oneness with the universe by escaping from our “material body” into some kind of ghost-like “body of light.” Or by traveling “upward” into a “higher plane of existence.” These false opposites of *high* and *low* interfere with true spiritual awakening.

To let go of the dividing line between Heaven and Earth is to expand into a full-bodied reality. A kind of spiritual orgasm. This suggests, of course, that the kind of orgasm we experience in ordinary sex is not really the goal of Tantric sex. Some would even say that enlightenment itself is like an orgasm, but an orgasm of a different kind. One that encompasses the whole body and beyond, and goes on and on without end. Perhaps the mystical vision of creation is one massive, continuous “orgasm” — and somehow humanity has lost its way and fallen by the wayside, having to rely on the second-hand orgasm of biological sex as a substitute for the all-encompassing bliss of mind, body, and cosmos.

This example of the ouroboros comes very close to revealing the two true opposites that Tantric initiates work with. But we’re not quite there yet. There are still two other false dualities to explore.

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*“I am divided for love’s sake, for the chance of union. This is the creation of the world, that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all.”*

—Aleister Crowley

*“...the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it.”*

— from the forbidden Gospel of Thomas

*“My destination is no longer a place, but rather a new way of seeing.”*

— Marcel Proust

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### 3. The time dimension: beginning and end

Is the orgasm all that matters in sex? Is the final episode the most important part of the mini-series? Of course not. The beginning is as important as the end. We cannot force them both to appear at the same time. We don't need to. They are already part of the same thing. When we know this, we don't force change to happen. We simply go with it and ride it out. The most magical part of this is when we get smart about it and learn not to fight change but to help it along.

In sex, sorcery is also possible. For some of our readers, I'm sure this is where it gets even weirder, but the time dimension is the most magical element of sex magic — for if you desire to produce change in your life, it's possible for you to use sexual energy to achieve it.

The key to the time dimension involves seeing the object of your desire as though it is already achieved. There is no need to suffer from desire. No need to be “strung out” or “strung along” by the future, lusting for results. Lusting to be anywhere other than where you currently are. Your goal is already yours! If you desire something, does that mean the object of your desire is separate from you? Perhaps that's not really what's happening at all. Perhaps your desire is the very thing that invokes your oneness with the thing you want. We will explain this in greater detail in the next article, when we reveal a couple of methods.

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*“I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”*

— Revelations 22:13

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These two opposites, *beginning* and *end*, are not really opposites. Beginnings and endings are fictional constructs. They only exist on *maps* of the world, not in the actual world itself. This may not seem self-evident to you now, but if you learn how to sink beneath these false opposites and work with the two true opposites of Tantra, you'll be able to see that the universe has no actual beginning or end. And neither do you.

#### **4. The moral dimension: good and evil**

Why does our yogi in the graveyard scene mentioned above claim that his sacrifice will make him a “lord of the world” or a “great raja”? Why would a spiritual man desire the power of a warlord?

There are two apparent goals in Tantra. One is enlightenment, and the other is power. In conventional religion, these two goals are presented as mutually exclusive, as though we must stand at a crossroads and make a moral choice between one or the other. Between good and evil. Which will it be? Charity work or a penthouse view over Central Park?

Tantra blasts this false dilemma out of the way. It insists that the quest for enlightenment and the quest for power are, in truth, the same path, and that civilization has separated these two worldviews into false opposites in order to *disempower* us.

(artist unknown)

Religion is helpful when it points out that power and pleasure are dangerous pursuits. However, it is not so helpful when it labels them as categorically evil and locks them away in a vault somewhere. In the esoteric mysticism of ancient India, there were two forms of yoga. Among the general population of non-initiates, one form was considered “good” and the other “evil.” The good and evil forms of yoga are referred to in Sanskrit as *mukti* and *bhukti*. *Mukti* yoga was utilized to achieve enlightenment, and *bhukti* yoga was utilized to achieve power and pleasure. One was mystical, and the

other was magical. For a spiritual practice to be truly Tantric, *both* forms of yoga must be present — *and any sense of opposition between them must be dissolved.*

If we sit in a room and read famous quotes about world peace, and then sit down to meditate, then we aren't really doing Tantra. And likewise, if we learn about "Tantra" just for the purpose of enhancing our sex lives, we are still not really doing Tantra. An authentic Tantric practice always includes the *bhukti* with the *mukti*. The way of Earth and the way of Heaven. And most importantly, *the quest for power and pleasure on Earth is always subordinated to the quest for enlightenment.*

But let's be clear about that last sentence just for a second. Power and pleasure are not the opposite of enlightenment. Subordinating one to the other has nothing to do with submitting to a higher moral conscience. Nor does it have anything to do with trying to be a superior or good person. It's simply a way of acknowledging how the universe works.

The *world as it actually is* always trumps the *world as our nervous system compels us to see it*. Reality is the ultimate power source behind illusion. The viewpoint of worldly power and pleasure is not really what it appears to be, so when we conjure up power and pleasure, the point is not to secure these things for ourselves, like we might obtain a new house or a new spouse. The point is to sink beneath the appearances of power and pleasure. To dissolve into the bliss that underlies them. Into that stream of endlessly unfolding power. We merge with the very thing that creates all forms of power and pleasure. For that is what the universe truly is. A perpetually unfolding expression of power and pleasure.

Indeed, religion's separation of the *bhukti* from the *mukti* is what has resulted in the *true* evil of humanity's current predicament. This separation of the world into the "good" and the "bad" cuts human beings off from their power source. The dualistic mindset of religion turns the average citizen of the city state into an earthly servant of an imaginary, otherworldly heaven. It pits mind against body. Man against nature. Light against darkness. It fills our lives with "shoulds" and "musts." Keeps us corralled inside our little egos, encircled by the phantoms of approval and rejection. Reward and punishment. Wealth and poverty. Salvation and damnation.

Enlightenment gets kidnapped and locked away behind the gates of Heaven. Magic becomes forbidden, and it gets locked away in the depths of Hell, along with all the other “pagan” practices of our pre-agricultural and pre-industrial ancestors. And all we’re left with is a trite guidebook of good behavior that supposedly gains us a seat in the choir of Heaven. But in reality, good behavior is not the same thing as a spiritual practice. Kindness, when used as a means of combating wickedness, cannot remove the dividing line between Heaven and Earth. Tantra does that — that is, if we know how to wield it. This is probably the main reason why Tantra is considered so subversive and dangerous. It tells us that being good is not your ticket to Heaven. It never was.

If moral goodness is more important to you than enlightenment, then you are traumatized. You suffer from a subtle form of PTSD. How so? The need to escape from a world of hurt has replaced your quest for the real you. The many past wounds you’ve experienced — in this current life, as well as in your deep evolutionary past — have caused safety and comfort to become more important than adventure. Enlightenment is anything but a hiding place tucked away in some kind of inner tower, safe from all the bad things that have happened to you. If all you do on your spiritual path is “take refuge in the *sangha*,” you will not succeed. Not in this lifetime, anyway.

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*“I let go of all desire for the common good, and the good became as common as grass.”*

— Lao Tzu

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To dissolve the moral duality of good and evil, Tantra sometimes encourages the blatant violation of rules imposed by civilization. Particularly, it encourages a disregard of the moral taboos enforced by institutionalized religion. As you might recall from previous articles, religion was invented as a counterfeit form of spirituality. As a form of moral control that has replaced the magic of our shamanic hunter-gatherer ancestors. If this is truly so, it should become obvious that a deliberate violation of cultural taboos can be helpful on the path to liberation.

But we must not misunderstand this. Acts of transgression, whether you’re having sex in a graveyard or inviting a homeless man to dine with your family on a Wednesday, are not done selfishly. They may produce a bit of a thrill, but the thrill is not the point. Such acts are done out of love. They break through the evil of the blind, unconscious control of propriety. And help us to help others learn how to do the same. And its not really all about scary dead bodies and smelly menstrual blood. It’s about dissolving the

embedded trauma that we associate with these things. It's about freeing your mind from the phantoms of good and evil.

Sorry, rebels, but good and evil are not the opposites we are looking for either.

## Alchemy

Before I reveal the true opposites that we work with in sexual Tantra, we're going to explore, briefly, the world of literary devices. Specifically, we're going to explore the art and science of using metaphors. Let's visit the study of a medieval alchemist.

Historians are mostly aware of the alchemist as a charlatan, a con man who claimed he could make you rich by transforming lead into gold. Or a deluded medieval chemist who worked with fire, water, and herbs in a crude laboratory, trying to create the elixir of immortality. Yes, some of these men were deluded, and some were con artists, it's true. That's because many a would-be alchemist did not sufficiently develop his skill with metaphors and, as a result of this weakness, failed to select the correct pair of opposites to work with. He was unable to see past the outward *symbols* of the opposites to the opposites themselves.

Like our yogi who's having sex in the graveyard, the true alchemist had to be a "great poet," a "lord of the world." He had to be fluent in the language of spiritual metaphors. He did not work only with the *physical* substances in his lab. Everything in his world was a symbolic expression of something deeper. Like a shaman, he knew that the outer senses do not really capture the living inner reality behind the face of the world. He believed he could see beyond that face, so his primary work in the laboratory was with imagination— and it is in the realm of *imaginal substances* that we will find our true pair of opposites.

Note that I am using the word "*imaginal*," not "*imaginary*." "*Imaginary*" would imply that the substances the alchemist worked with weren't real. When you work with imagination intensively, you eventually discover that imagination is quite real. It is, in fact, the only reality we witness from moment to moment. For a more in-depth discussion of this ancient way of looking at imagination, see *Forbidden Realms* article #6: "The Philosopher's Stone."

The true alchemist often got his start as an ordinary artisan or physician. He was either a metallurgist or an herbalist. Some alchemists learned how to do extraordinary things with metals (an especially dangerous craft), and some worked primarily in herbal medicine. The alchemist was an ordinary blacksmith, jeweler, or physician who went much deeper into his craft than usual, to such a degree that he could see beyond the ordinariness of it. He could see beauty and meaning at a far deeper level than most of his peers. Yes, he did create magical amulets and potions, but the mysteries he explored in his workshop penetrated well beyond the mere outward trappings of amulets and potions.

To anyone who has given alchemy serious study, it's almost never clear whether the alchemist is writing about a physical substance cooking in an actual glass vessel, or whether it is a spiritual substance that he is stewing over in the depths of his soul. The ingredients he mentions in his obscure instructions — glass, gold, semen, salt, lead, menstrual blood, etc. — are apparently not the actual ingredients he's talking about. Everything in alchemy seems to be a metaphor for something else. And it is a lack of knowledge of this "something else" that makes alchemical texts impenetrable to the average reader. And so, it is a lack of skill with metaphors that blocks most of us from the true practice of sexual Tantra. For as we will see, Tantra is essentially an alchemical discipline.

In alchemy, the true opposites we are looking for are often represented by the metaphors of *man* and *woman*, Sun and Moon, fire and water, Heaven and Earth, spirit and matter, light and darkness, etc. All these pairs of opposites were merely emblematic of the true inner principles we're looking for, of course. When we visualize these various symbols coming together in imagination, interesting scenarios can arise. And as we play these scenarios out, the true, deeper opposites begin to show themselves. We begin to get a glimmer of understanding. It's difficult for us to be aware of what the inner opposites really are unless we use outer symbolic forms, such as the Sun and Moon, to represent them.

To make this dazzling array of symbols even more bewildering, the alchemists who worked with metal added yet another couple of opposites to the mix: sulfur and mercury. These two chemicals they would combine in their laboratories — to observe interesting results. (Mostly in their imaginations, of course. As an ordinary chemist,

there aren't many practical things you can do with a combination of actual sulfur and mercury.)

As they combined these two substances, they began to discern, through their exceptionally well-developed skill with metaphor, the true opposites that must be combined in order to achieve enlightenment. These two opposites were unlike anything that any language had ever attempted to capture before, so the alchemists simply kept the same labels, "sulfur" and "mercury," to refer to them. And to distinguish between the ordinary, outward sulfur and mercury and the inward Sulphur and Mercury of the soul, the alchemists sometimes capitalized the words. And thus, at last, we get the two secret opposites used in both alchemy and Tantra: Sulphur and Mercury.

Obviously, these new, capitalized proper nouns still don't help us very much, so let's attempt to define what Sulphur and Mercury actually represent in the human soul. There are two universal substances that appear to be opposing each other at the deepest level of imagination. These are the core opposites within us.

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*"I have spoken about Mercury, Sulphur, the vessel, their treatment, etc. etc.; and, of course, all these things are to be understood with a grain of salt. You must understand that in the preceding chapters I have spoken metaphorically; if you take my words in a literal sense, you will reap no harvest except your outlay."*

— from an alchemical text called *An Open Entrance*, author unknown (1669)

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## Mercury

The ordinary mercury (with a small "m") that we know from chemistry is also known as quicksilver, a liquid metal, and since it flows and tumbles about as though it were some kind of liquefied mirror, mercury represents the inner faculty of imagination. It is a tricky substance, much like the imagination. You can't grab hold of it or pin it down, but you can play with it, at least, and watch it elude your ultimate control.

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*You can reach  
But you can't grab it  
You can hold it, control it  
No but, you can't bag it*

*You can push  
But you can't direct it  
Circulate, regulate, oh no  
You cannot connect it*

*You know you're chewing bubblegum  
You know what that is  
But you still want some  
You just can't get enough  
Of that lovie dovie stuff...*

— U2

One of the most difficult things to understand about alchemical Mercury (with a capital “M”) is that it represented something more than just the small human imagination, or your meager ability to visualize things in your head. For these ancient mystics, the faculty of imagination wasn't just the simple brain function you use to plan a new color scheme for your living room. The *Mercurial* level of imagination existed on an epic level. It was seen as a cosmic-background substance that suffused everything in the universe. A fundamental medium through which everything in creation becomes visible. As though all things we experience in this world are merely reflections shown forth in a vast Mercurial mirror, none other than the mind of God Himself.

## **Sulphur**

Ordinary laboratory sulfur (with a small “s”) is a yellow mineral. Its color apparently reminded the ancient alchemists of the Sun. It is best known to modern chemists as one of the three ingredients of gunpowder. To the astrologer, the Sun represents the quality of a person's ego. That's why your astrological sign — known to an astrologer as your Sun sign — is supposedly so important in determining the most visible quality of your personality.

Sulfur, the mineral, is flammable. And so, Sulphur represents that part of you that “catches fire.” It is that flash of inspiration when you see something that motivates you. In an enlightened being, there is always something burning. Something stewing. He or she is always onto something big or inspired in a big way by something small,

exploring the one taste or the one fragrance of the present moment. This ability to stay permanently “lit up” by the present moment is one of the namesakes of enlightenment.

Because of its flammable nature, Sulphur was considered a dangerous substance within the soul. In an unenlightened being, Sulphur still functions, but quite to the contrary, it seems to *malfunction*. Sulphur can spur us into lifestyles of addiction, hedonism, consumerism, and greed.

In our essence, we all want to be enlightened, of course, but we look for our Gold in the wrong places. We seek out our “Golden” existence by trying to procure a yellow metal. We look for the crystalline perfection of enlightenment in the crystalline perfection of a diamond wedding ring. Or we take sexual metaphors at face value and try to find bliss in our sexual partners. We become dependent on drugs to feel closer to God. Etc. People who chase after joy in the wrong places are essentially deluded alchemists. Charlatans. They have not learned how to work with metaphors yet, and that makes them ill equipped to understand any of the hidden arts of Tantra, much less the sexual forms of those hidden arts.

Alchemical Sulphur (with a capital “S”) is, therefore, not really a mineral. It is the forceful, fiery quality of your character. Or rather, the force of character that exists within any phenomenon that arises in your perception of the universe. Sulphur represents the essence not only of *your* unique personality but also the personality of *any* phenomenon you happen to be looking at. Sulphur is both the unique image of you as an enlightened being and the unique image of any natural force as it actually *is*, in its truest, most honest appearance. An image that is expressing itself as a specific reflection in the cosmic mirror of Mercury.

A candle is analogous to the astrological symbol of the Sun

You might look at the astrological symbol of the Sun as a perfect combination of Sulphur and Mercury. The dot at the center is the image of the true self (Sulphur) attempting to arise in the circular mirror of the soul (Mercury). Or think of it like a lighted candle. The center of the candle is the wick, of course, the part that catches fire. The flame is the perfect “you” (Sulphur) that is beholding its own perfect reflection in the mirror of the melted wax (Mercury). In most of us, this flame is trying to see itself clearly, but it’s not necessarily succeeding. Its reflection in the Mercurial mirror is distorted due to our agitated, trauma-riddled imaginations. This problem of “trying but not succeeding” — this failure of your self to “self-actualize” — is the primary concern of both alchemy and Tantra.

### **The Secret Goal of Alchemy**

The alchemist’s ultimate secret, then, is this: When it comes to the incarnation of each human being, the two qualities of the soul — Sulphur and Mercury — almost never manage to combine in an ideal form. That is, ordinary human beings like you and me are flawed. We do not have perfectly polished mirrors showing forth our true and divine character. And because of this bad combination of Sulphur and Mercury, the inner mirror of our souls makes our world appear distorted. That is, the force of the world’s character appears ugly or threatening to us, or just plain “not good enough.” And likewise, the quality of our *own* character can appear ugly or threatening to others. Or perhaps just tainted somehow, as in “original sin.” Or perhaps, we are just troubled by the simple feeling of inadequacy or “unsatisfactoriness” that characterizes the unenlightened state.

The goal of alchemy, then, was to correct this poor combination. To separate your Sulphur from your Mercury and then recombine the two as they were meant to be together, such that the true character of everything in existence can shine forth for you perfectly as it actually is, without fuss or flaw. Such that your own character can shine forth and take on the qualities of “a great poet, a lord of the world who, like a raja, always travels by elephant-back.” Well, you get the idea.

The alchemical wedding of Sulphur and Mercury, Sun and Moon, semen and menstrual blood

The secret procedure for bringing Sulphur and Mercury together has many fanciful names: *Mysterium conjuntionis*, “the Marriage of the Sun and Moon,” the “Chemical Wedding,” or simply the “Operation of the Sun.” The Sun is usually considered male, and the Moon female. That isn’t literally true, of course, but it does help us see these two substances as living beings. Or as living substances that long to connect with each other, almost as though they are cosmic lovers who are, for some reason, being kept apart— so you might begin to see how sexual Tantra lends itself easily to the practice of alchemy. An alchemy of the bed chamber instead of the laboratory. However you symbolize it — male and female, Sulphur and Mercury, semen and menstrual blood — this union of opposites, if done correctly, creates the “Gold” of awakening.

The secret of Tantric sex, then, is the same as the secret of alchemy — the technique of separating and recombining Sulphur and Mercury — your *divine character* and your *imagination*. Note that the true separation and recombination does not happen between *man* and *woman* (or between you and whomever your sex partner may be). That energy exchange is an outward distraction. The real energy combo happens inside of you. Each partner unites a Sun and a Moon within him or herself. The fantasies we harbor about men emitting energy and women receiving it are simply false. Both partners give off energy, and each partner contains his or her own inner Sulphur and Mercury. And most importantly, each partner circulates sexual energy primarily within him or herself.

Once we realize this, the whole game changes. Tantric sex becomes either boring or fascinating, depending on our ability to see its inner workings through the skillful use of metaphors. Tantra might become boring to us because it's no longer all about the sex. Or it might become fascinating because now we know where the real action needs to happen!

The most obvious barrier to the true, inner practice of Tantric sex is that it doesn't look very sexy. The most common form, known as consort practice, involves a woman sitting on her lover's lap, facing him, legs wrapped around his pelvis. The two partners mostly just sit still. Their sex organs may or may not necessarily be conjoined. Actual intercourse doesn't matter so much because the two partners, for the most part, just sit there, embracing and kissing, simply feeling the arousal of sexual energy as they face each other. Each partner focuses inwardly as the energy rises — and each uses that energy to unite the opposites within him or herself.

### Karmamudra (consort practice)

This might seem like a very clinical or detached way of having sex. But such a perception creates yet another barrier that bars us from entering the inner sanctuary. To really be present with someone and become who you truly are in their presence, while also helping them to become who *they* really are in *your* presence, is perhaps the most intimate and loving experience imaginable. It is far more “naked” than the nakedness of ordinary sex. But to be able to do such a thing, we’ve got to reach a point in our development where complete openness is possible. That is, our evolutionary baggage needs to be dissolved. If sex triggers primordial images of aggression or power struggles, the trust required for a Tantric union will most likely not emerge. The “way within” will remain shut.

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*“The way is shut. It was made by those who are dead. And the dead keep it.”*

— J.R.R. Tolkien

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Not everyone is capable of understanding this inner kind of cosmic romance. They are easily distracted by the outward appearances of symbols and metaphors. In the alchemy of their bedroom, they fall into the trap of believing that their sexual partner is their “opposite.” And in the alchemy of their laboratory, they end up believing that ordinary chemical sulfur and chemical mercury can actually combine to change lead into gold.

*“All that glitters is not gold —  
Often have you heard that told.  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outsides to behold.”*  
— Shakespeare

When you get past the outward barriers and fully engage your ability to see metaphors as gateways to the primordial, imaginal substances of the universe, you're then able to discern the ultimate “sexual” union of the cosmic Sun and Moon. *And then, finally, you can begin your practice of separating and recombining. Separating and recombining. Separating and recombining. Until you finally realize oneness with the true, divine Self.*

Engravings from *\*De Lapide Philosophico\** by Johann Bernhard Hildebrandt (1625)  
Captions from *\*The Alchemist's Kitchen\** by Guy O'giluy (2006)

## **Tzimtzum**

I know that this subject is difficult — and that it isn't clear yet. The obvious question before us now goes something like this: “Well, how do I combine my ‘divine force of character’ with my ‘imagination’? I don't even know what my ‘divine force of character’ is!”

The two ultimate cosmic opposites are difficult — if not impossible — to grasp, so let's use another set of metaphors, and see whether we can discern how Sulphur and Mercury have emerged as the keys to enlightenment. Let's go back to the dawn of creation and see how Sulphur and Mercury separated and combined to create this explosion of drama that we know of today as the entire universe.

You might be familiar with these opening lines from the Book of Genesis in the Bible: “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

Is this where the story truly begins? Let's rewind the universe a bit further back and look at what supposedly happened *before* the first line in Genesis.

There's an old Kabbalistic myth about the creation of the universe, put forth by the Rabbi Isaac Luria in the 1500s. He called it *Tzimtzum* (a Hebrew word for the alchemical process of condensation). Before God was able to face His own reflection in the waters of the universe, there weren't any waters. In fact, according to Kabbalah, there wasn't even any God. There was only the perfect peace and profundity of non-existence, a state of total emptiness that Kabbalists refer to as *Ain* (pronounced “Ah-EEN”). *Ain* means “no thing.” Or “no-thing-ness.”

This strange notion of a non-existent God is not really as difficult to understand as it seems. Any given *thing* can be said to exist, but only if it stands out in relative contrast to something else. To be considered a thing, it must be perceivable as a *separate thing* distinguishable from *other things*. When there are no dividing lines in the universe, then there are no “things” that can be delineated within it. If there are no things delineated, then *no thing* can be said to exist. And therefore, in a state of absolute oneness, nothing truly exists. Not even God. However, the words “nothingness” and “emptiness,” used to describe God as he was before the first word in Genesis, can become a bit misleading, unless you keep in mind that these words refer to a reality that is empty of any distinguishable form. This ultimately unified reality could just as easily be called “fullness” or “every-thing-ness” because all of existence before the first word in Genesis was completely full of God.

But something happened in the depths of this vast no-thing-ness. God became restless, and in some way we cannot completely fathom, he desired to know Himself. To see Himself. To touch Himself. But there was no surface to touch and no face to look upon. There was not yet any division between a “self” and an “other.”

And so, God initiated the process of *Tzimtzum*. He *condensed* Himself. He withdrew Himself from a part of “himself,” creating a make-believe emptiness within. This emptiness was “without form and void” — and yet it was also the “face of the waters” mentioned in Genesis. This watery substance that condensed out of the vastness of God’s heavenly countenance was the Mercury of imagination. You might consider that this ocean of Mercury basically created a surface in which God could behold his reflection. He was beginning to create a silver view screen —much like the “silver screen” in a conventional movie theater.

It was only at this point that God came into existence as we know it. Once the projection screen was created, the projector Himself also became distinctly aware of Himself as something separate from the projection screen. And so, God started up the movie projector (Sulphur), and the grand production began. The drama of the universe began to unfold. This is essentially how God was supposed to become acquainted with Himself in the theater of His cosmic imagination: “And God saw the light, and that it was good.” God’s Sulphur projects itself upon His Mercury, and the universe magically appears and plays itself out on the silver screen of imagination.

If only it could have gone that smoothly. Something went terribly wrong...

Sulphur is an unpredictable and flammable substance, and when God started up the projector, there was an explosion. Many Kabbalists say that we know about this explosion today in the scientific theory of the Big Bang. The whole movie theater got blasted to bits, and pieces of Sulphur and Mercury went flying apart into the void, tumbling into the empty space God had created within himself. Everything in the explosion spread out and turned into a scattered, confused mess (the notorious *massa confusa* of the alchemists). As a result of this primordial cataclysm, there are now billions upon billions of separations between Sulphur and Mercury scattered and buried throughout the depths of space and time. Alchemists claim that Sulphur and Mercury can be found everywhere, and in everything — and that working with these

two substances in the right way can cause God to once again behold Himself in the mirror of His imagination.

Is this primordial Sulphur and Mercury to be found in the crust of the Earth? As though we can sort through the rocks and other debris of that long-ago explosion? Are the two fundamental aspects of God really waiting to be extracted from ore by a metallurgist? And for that matter, did alchemists really separate these substances in a glass vessel and then get them to face each other, to rebuild that primordial theater of God's imagination?

Well no, of course not. Not literally. But that didn't stop them from trying. And as an alchemist attempted to do this, he was not thinking literally. He was looking past the chemicals in his lab and beholding the cosmic opposites within his own soul. He was not literally able to unite the opposites in a test tube, but he was able to unite them within his own imagination.

The idea behind alchemy is the same as the idea behind Tantra, that the Sulphur and Mercury — the *will* and the *imagination* of God — exist in the soul of each human being. Each human being, therefore, bears the responsibility for bringing the spirit of God once again face-to-face with its reflection. Or rather, each human being bears the responsibility for extracting Sulphur and Mercury and then recombining them properly. At least in some small way.

If this is the task that lies before us, then why is it so difficult to understand? Why is it supposedly so hard to do? What is it that keeps your Sulphur and Mercury confused and separated?

### **Shiva and Shakti**

At this point it can help us if we shift metaphors. Instead of using substances like Sulphur and Mercury to represent the opposites, we can use two characters in a soap opera.

In the [Shaiva Tantra](#) tradition of ancient India, our two ultimate opposites took on male and female forms in a story about the cosmic romance between *Shiva* and *Shakti*. Shiva was the masculine principle that was said to exist beyond time and space. Shakti was the feminine principle that gives birth to the universe. For our purposes here, Shiva is

Sulphur and Shakti is Mercury. In many stories, these two lovers try to get together, but often their efforts to unite are thwarted by evil forces. This drama of true love that becomes frustrated by Earthly circumstances is universal, of course. It plays itself out in many well-known stories in cultures all over the world.

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*“Out of eternity, I turn my face to you,  
And into eternity.  
We have been in love that long.”  
— Rumi*

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Take the movie *Titanic*, for example. *Titanic* is a love story about the two iconic characters, Jack and Rose. Jack is not a creature of the world. He’s a dreamer, a virtually penniless artist who gambles and wins a ticket to America aboard the S.S. *Titanic*. Rose is a first-class passenger on the ship, and she’s a lover of art. But Rose is being held captive in a snobby upper-class lifestyle. Her mother pressures her to marry the rich steel tycoon, Cal Hockley, whom Rose doesn’t love: “Our situation is precarious. You know the money’s gone. Your father left us nothing but a legacy of bad debts hidden by a good name. That name is the only card we have to play. I don’t understand you! It is a fine match with Hockley — it will ensure our survival...”

And of course, Rose then meets her true love, Jack, the dreamy, penniless artist. But she’s afraid to run away with him. To leave all the comforts and safety of wealth behind. And of course, the drama unfolds itself as she struggles not only with herself but also with her mother to get free. Even more menacing is her jilted fiancé, Hockley, who refuses to let her go.

Jack and Rose are, of course, cinematic incarnations of Shiva and Shakti. But of particular interest to us now are these other two characters: Rose’s mother and the rich man, Hockley. These two shadowy figures represent the two behaviors of ego, the false persona that we have built up around our true core of cosmic opposites. The *clinger* and the *controller*. For it is these clinging and controlling behaviors— which “will ensure our survival” — that keep our authentic core opposites, Shiva and Shakti, from getting together.

All of the rampant clinging and controlling you see going on around you — the greed, the jealousy, the autocracy, the bureaucracy...these are the hallmarks of the

responsible, civil, uptight “adult” who passes for normal. This persona within you, which survives by “staying on top of things,” which pits Heaven against Earth, is the impostor. It keeps the core opposites within you from uniting. And it perpetuates its false status as “the real you” by doing just that.

The four exterior dimensions of Tantra. The two core opposites. And the clinging and controlling ego. These forces all around us and within us are not easy to understand unless we symbolize them and characterize them in various imaginal scenarios. And even when we catch a glimpse past the outer masks to behold the Sulphur and Mercury within, we are often terrified by what we find there.

If Shiva and Shakti unite, the ego will become unnecessary. It will be annihilated. And since we identify with our egos, the truth about the “Sun” and “Moon” within scares the hell out of us. We get triggered and terrified, and we flee back into the outer dimensions of life. Most of the drama and suffering we create results from an attempt to stay safely in the world of outer appearances, hiding from the annihilation within.

But then comes the most difficult challenge of all. Once we have fled from the core reality of Sulphur and Mercury, we are then really caught in a bind. The true opposites on the *inside* threaten to unite and destroy who we are, and the false opposites on the *outside* fail to satisfy us anymore. It's too late to run and hide. We have seen the truth.

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*Without the masks, where will you hide  
Can't find yourself, lost in your lies  
I know the truth now  
I know who you are...  
— Evanescence*

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At this point in our lives, then, we are ready. Ready to engage in the true practice of sexual Tantra.

If you've made it this far into this article, you're obviously clear-minded enough to glimpse the hidden truth buried beneath outer appearances in this exploded,

scattered, and confused universe. In the next article, we will meet a famous — or rather, infamous — practitioner of Tantric sex...and a couple of methods, which you can then use to unite the Shiva and Shakti within. If you dare...

Stay tuned!

Shiva and Shakti, Jack and Rose, Romeo and Juliet, Christian and Satine — all of these famous romances are paraded before us as secret allegories about the true opposites within each human being, longing for ultimate unity: the bliss and oblivion of enlightenment (scenes from the film \*Moulin Rouge,\* 2001)

Meditation

Enlightenment

Alchemy

Sex

Tantra

